

on this challenging job—and it is challenging.

Over the last four years, I've had the privilege of working with perhaps the finest group of Joint Chiefs and combatant commanders that we've ever had. And our many outstanding one- and two-star flag officers promise to continue or even exceed that record of excellence.

But the people who have earned a truly special place in my heart, in all of our hearts, are the men and women whose names don't appear in the papers or on the evening news; the ones who serve America quietly and professionally every day, the men and women who wear this country's uniform, and the dedicated civil servants who support them. They are the ones who deserve our special and lasting gratitude. They are represented here today by these magnificent troops and by our wounded veterans. Please join me now in recognizing them for their service.

And let us remember in a special way those who have fallen in service to this nation. They remain in our hearts, each one of them, a reminder that our country is blessed beyond all measure. Let us never forget how much we owe them.

When terrorists attacked us so ruthlessly on September 11th, they may have thought they knew who we were. They may have thought we were weak, grown used to comfort, softened by everything we enjoy in this great nation. But they were wrong. They must have failed to notice that it was by the sweat and blood of each soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine, and each member of the Coast Guard, that America has met every threat throughout our history.

When we needed them, the heroes of this generation stepped forward to defend America from terrorists. In the process, two brutal regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq—regimes that harbored and encouraged terrorists—have been removed from power. And as a result, 50 million people, almost all of them Muslims, have also been released from tyranny.

In a region where many thought freedom and self-government could never succeed, those values are beginning to take hold. The tide is turning against the terrorists' brand of totalitarianism. Like Nazism and communism before them, this false ideology is headed for the ash heap of history.

And at the same time that we are facing the enormous of winning a global war, we've also advanced the president's agenda for transforming the department. We've made major adjustments in programs such as the Trident Submarine Force, new classes of surface ships, unmanned aerial vehicles, Army artillery and Army aviation, missile defense and transformational communications across the department.

We've introduced a whole new civilian personnel system for the department. And along the way, we've done four regular budgets, four budget amendments, and at least six supplementals. None of these decisions was easy; indeed, many were difficult. But in no small measure, because of what seemed, at times, like endless hours of meetings—and no, Don, I'm not complaining—we managed to achieve agreement between the senior civilian and military leadership of DoD.

Senator Ted Stevens paid tribute to that fact this past week when he said, "I've never seen such a relationship between chiefs and the secretary—open discussions, open critique—and really, a give and take that was very helpful and very healthy as far as the department is concerned."

However, as important as these programmatic decisions have been, transformation is most of all about new ways of thinking; about how to use old systems in

new ways. During the last four years, the concepts of transformation and asymmetric warfare have gone from being theoretical concepts to battlefield realities, and are even penetrating our vast acquisition apparatus, from the bureaucracy, to industry, to Congress.

But I don't have to tell this audience that all our marvelous machines and technology would mean nothing without innovative and skillful people to employ them.

And even then, this department would be of little value if our people lacked one particular quality. It's the indispensable quality and the most precious one of all, human courage. In this job, which has been so much more than a job to me, I've seen courage in abundance.

I remember the valor of an Army sergeant named Steve Workman. In the desperate moments after Flight 77 slammed into these walls, he risked his life to get Navy Lieutenant Kevin Shaeffer out of the building and to the medical attention he desperately needed. Sergeant Workman stayed with the badly wounded—burned officer and kept him talking and kept him alive.

I'll remember the bravery of people like Corporal Eddie Wright, a Marine who was hit by an RPG that ruptured his eardrum, broke his femur and, most seriously, blew off both his hands. In the confusion, Marines who had never seen combat before needed reassurance, and it was Eddie Wright, as badly wounded as he was, who gave it to them, telling them he was fine, giving instructions on his own first aid, pointing out enemy positions while directing his driver to get them out of the ambush zone. Like so many of our wounded heroes, Eddie's moving on in life with the same courage that he summoned in those desperate moments in Iraq.

And I remember October 26, 2003, the day our hotel in Baghdad, the Al-Rashid, was attacked. Tragically, a great soldier, Lieutenant Colonel Chad Buehring, was killed that day, and five others, civilian and military, were severely wounded.

Visiting the hospital that afternoon, I spoke to an Army colonel who was the most severely wounded. I asked him where he was from, and he said, "I live in Arlington, Virginia, but I grew up in Lebanon, in Beirut." So I asked him how he felt about building a new Middle East. He gave me a thumbs-up, and despite his obvious pain, he also gave me a smile. Today Colonel Elias Nimmer is now virtually recovered and still on active duty with the U.S. Army.

But courage comes in many forms. Sometimes moral courage, the courage to face criticism and challenge—received wisdom is as important as physical courage, and I see many examples of that. One such hero I've been privileged to know is Navy Medical Doctor Captain Marlene DeMaio. She was convinced that there was a serious flaw in the way we were designing body armor. In the face of considerable resistance and criticism, she put together a team whose research proved the need to modify the body armor design. She and her team took on the bureaucracy and won. Her moral courage has saved countless American lives in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

There are so many other stories I could share, but I will tell you just one more. Three months ago, I attended a funeral at Arlington for a soldier from St. Paul, Minnesota. Sergeant Michael Carlson had been killed just before the January 30th elections in Iraq. Not long after those historic elections, I received a letter from his mother.

Mrs. Carlson wrote to tell me how much it meant to her to see the joy on the faces of Iraqi voters, men and women who had risked their lives for something they believed in. She knew her son shared that same sort of

vision, and she sent me an essay that he had written as a high school senior that explained how she could be certain of that. It's a remarkable essay, particularly from such a young man.

Michael had been an outstanding high school football player, but he didn't want to become a professional athlete. He wrote, "I want my life to count for something more than just a game. I want to be good at life. I want to fight for something, be part of something that is greater than myself. The only way to live forever," this high school senior wrote, "is to live on in those you have affected. I sometimes dream of being a soldier, helping to liberate people from oppression. In the end," he said, "there's a monument built to immortalize us in stone."

Men and women like that, men and women like Michael Carlson do become immortalized because they live on in our nation's soul.

President Reagan used to ask, where do we find such people? And he would answer: We find them where we've always found them, on the streets and the farms of America. They are the product of the freest society man has ever known.

On one of my visits to Iraq, I met a brigade commander who told me how he explained his mission to his men. He said, "I tell them what they're doing in Iraq and what their comrades are doing in Afghanistan is every bit as important what their grandfathers did in Germany and Japan in World War II, or what their fathers did in Korea or Europe during the Cold War."

That colonel was right.

It's been a privilege of a lifetime to serve with the heroes of this generation who will be remembered with the same gratitude as we remember those who have gone before. Nothing is more satisfying than to be able to do work that can really make a difference, and I've been lucky to have many opportunities to do that, but this one was as good as they come.

Now the president has asked me to take on a new mission that of working on behalf of the world's poor. Although I leave the Department of Defense, I believe both our missions serve the goal of making this world a better place. It's an honor. But I have one big regret: I'll be leaving some of the most dedicated, most capable, most courageous people in the world.

In many speeches over these years, I've been accustomed to ask the good Lord to bless our troops and our country. While I do it for the last time as your deputy secretary, I want you to know that I will always carry these words as a prayer in my heart: May God bless you, may God bless the men and women who serve this country so nobly and so well, and may God bless America.

PUTTING PARTISANSHIP ASIDE

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, when I was running for the Senate in 2000, I pledged to put partisanship aside to do what is right for Nebraska. I told Nebraskans that if they elected me they could count on me to carefully consider the issues and ultimately do what I think is best.

From tax cuts, to Medicare reform to campaign finance reform and now to the battle over stalled judicial nominations, I have distanced myself from the partisan atmosphere in Washington to get things done.

Over the past few months and with great intensity over the past two weeks, I have been working with a bipartisan group of moderate-minded

Senators to craft an alternative to the "nuclear option"—the partisan and political attempt to force a change in the rules of the Senate to end filibusters against judicial nominations.

The nuclear option is a temporary political fix to a very serious and ongoing problem: The Senate's failure to confirm more than 60 nominations during the last administration and the filibustering of ten of President Bush's nominations. To address this problem, I would prefer a permanent rules change to the Senate over a temporary procedural maneuver like the nuclear option that can be reversed if the White House or the Congress changes hands.

The Senate was designed by our Founding Fathers to act as a counter balance to the House of Representatives which represented States based on population. The Senate was the chamber where each State would have equal representation, two Senators and two votes. The intent was to prevent the power in Congress from becoming concentrated in large population States like New York, California, Florida and Texas. In the Senate, a Senator from Nebraska has the same power as a Senator from any other State.

As a former Governor and a firm believer in the power of the executive branch to appoint Cabinet members, judges and other officials, I do not support filibustering nominations. In fact, as Nebraska's Senator, I have voted against filibustering judicial appointments in every case but one where I was denied access to background information on the nominee. However, I also do not think the nuclear option is the solution to the impasse over judicial nominations.

We have built consensus behind a plan whereby seven Republican Senators pledge to vote against the nuclear option in exchange for an agreement from seven Democrats to allow most of the stalled nominations to get up-or-down votes as well as a pledge to not support filibusters of future nominations except in extraordinary circumstances.

Our compromise would be constructed completely within the existing rules of the Senate; it would prevent the nuclear option and the expected fallout of bringing all Senate business, including the energy bill and other important legislation, to a halt; and would preserve the rights of the Senate minority not only for this Congress but for future Congresses regardless of who is in the majority. Protecting the Senate's minority rights might seem to go against the concept of democracy and majority rule. In reality and without the spin on this issue that the special interest groups from both extremes put on this matter, the Senate's minority rights are part of the system of checks and balances that keep any branch of government from dominating the others.

The minority rights aren't always about party politics either. Many fili-

busters throughout history were conducted by Senators who disagreed with the president or the majority of Senators. Filibusters also give small States such as Nebraska an important tool to protect itself from the will of the larger States.

The debate over these judges has consumed the Senate and all of Washington. When I am in Nebraska most folks do not ask me about the judicial nomination process. Nebraskans tell me they want an energy bill that will boost ethanol production and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Nebraskans are concerned about the President's plan to divert Social Security funds to private accounts and a myriad of other important legislative priorities.

Those who do mention judges and nominations express concern about where the Senate seemed to be headed. Many expressed to me the desire to stop the bickering and get on with the Senate's business. Others offered encouraging words in support of the compromise effort and those comments made me feel that Nebraskans were appreciative of our efforts.

The business, that we as Senators are tasked with carrying out for the American people would cease in the Senate if the majority leader follows through on his threats to employ the nuclear option. Nebraskans waiting for the energy bill, a Federal budget, asbestos litigation reform and even confirmation of future judicial nominations are the ones who will suffer if the nuclear option is detonated.

With our compromise everybody wins. Those seeking to protect minority rights win. Those seeking to confirm judicial nominations win. Small States win.

We accomplished this by working together with common purpose and shared concern for the future of this body. I am proud of what we have accomplished and I will treasure the new friends I made in the process. I thank you, all of you, for working with me, for trusting me, and for joining me in this great challenge.

I would like to include all the names of the signatories on the memorandum of understanding as part of my statement. These brave senators are: Senator JOHN MCCAIN, Senator JOHN WARNER, Senator ROBERT BYRD, Senator MARY LANDRIEU, Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE, Senator KEN SALAZAR, Senator MIKE DEWINE, Senator SUSAN COLLINS, Senator MARK PRYOR, Senator LINCOLN CHAFEE, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, Senator JOSEPH LIEBERMAN, and Senator DANIEL INOUE.

MEMORIAL DAY 2005

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute to those men and women of the U.S. armed services, who have given their lives to defend our Nation and the ideals it represents.

Since the birth of our Nation 229 years ago, millions of Americans have

answered the call to serve. They left behind the comfort of home, family and friends, to protect the American way of life and insure that our country would remain free and a land of opportunity for all. On this day I would like to remember those whom did not return.

On this Memorial Day, I am put in mind of the 200th and 515th Costal Artillery units of the New Mexico National Guard, better known as the New Mexico Brigade. The New Mexico Brigade played a prominent and heroic role in the fierce fighting in the Philippines, during those first dark days of the Second World War. For 4 months the men of the 200th and 515th helped hold off the Japanese only to be defeated by disease, starvation and a lack of ammunition.

Tragically the survivors of the Battle of Bataan from the New Mexico Brigade were subjected to the horrors and atrocities of the 65 mile "Death March" and to years of hardship and forced labor in Japanese prisoner of war camps. Sadly, of the 1800 men of the New Mexico Brigade more than 900 lost their lives in that far off place. This day belongs to them and all other Americans such as them.

I believe it is especially important not to forget; the men and women of America's Armed Forces have given their lives not only in defense of our Nation, but to preserve the freedom of others around the globe. This is almost unquiet in human history, and no praise can be too great for those individuals.

Today I would like to make special mention of those New Mexicans who have given their lives in Operation Iraq Freedom and the global war on terror. I ask that New Mexicans on Memorial Day think of them and their families and give thanks that we are blessed with such heroic men and women.

We must never forget the sacrifices of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. I encourage New Mexican's and all Americans on Memorial Day to take a moment to remember and honor the brave men and women whom have fallen in our defense. At this moment in America's history, our men and women in uniform are again furthering the cause of freedom around the world and ensuring the safety of the United States of America. They serve with the same courage and commitment shown by Americans of generations past and they deserve our thoughts and prayers on this Memorial Day as well.

49TH FIGHTER WING

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the outstanding men and women of the 49th Fighter Wing at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico.

The 49th has received a deployment order to the Western Pacific region in support of our national defense objectives.

Around 250 personnel from Holloman, along with approximately 15 F-117A